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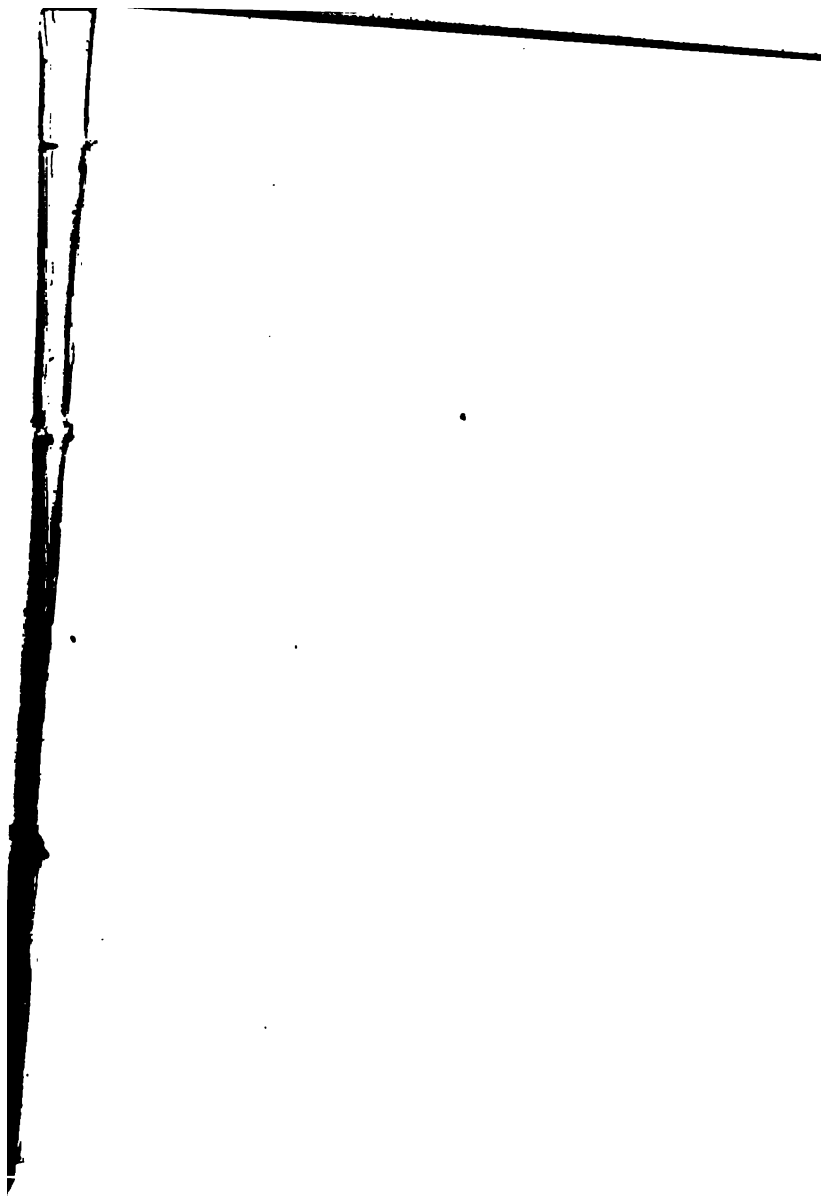






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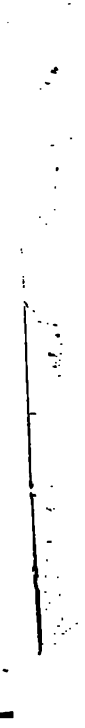




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*Est Virgil*





— E. H. Krigel

# A LEAF OF EXPRESS HISTORY.

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MR. E. H. VIRGIL

AND

THE NATIONAL COMPANY.

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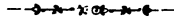
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## A LEAF OF EXPRESS HISTORY.



**A**S is indicated by the title, the matter following is a sketch of the rise, rapid growth and present importance of the Express business, and the prominent connection therewith held from the first by Mr. E. H. Virgil, of Troy, N. Y. The information contained in it was gathered from conversations with that gentleman, and the object of this sketch is to present in brief, the history of one of the pioneer companies in particular—that of the National Express Company. In so doing, the writer will recount the birth, middle age and riper years of both the company and the gentleman named, they being closely allied to each other.

## ROUTES AND STATIONS.

The routes of the National Express Company extend through portions of the States of New York, Massachusetts and Vermont, and the Province of Quebec, with principal offices at New York, Albany, Troy, Saratoga, Plattsburgh and Binghamton, N. Y.; North Adams, Mass.; Rutland, Burlington and St. Albans, Vt.; and St. Johns and Montreal, P. Q.

## MR. VIRGIL'S EARLY HISTORY.

Mr. E. H. Virgil is a native of Massachusetts, having been born in Egremont, Berkshire county, on the 26th of September, 1808. In 1810 his parents removed to Fabius, Onondaga county, N. Y., and in 1820 to Richland, Oswego county, and again in 1823, to Union Square, Oswego county, where they purchased a home in which they resided until their decease, some years since. Mr. Virgil does not remember anything concerning the short period spent in imbibing the breezes wafted

from the Berkshire hills. He does, however, have a lively recollection of events which transpired at Union Square, N. Y., where he assisted his father in tilling the soil, not without dreams and ambitions reaching beyond the boundaries of the farm.

#### YOUTHFUL AMBITIONS.

His youthful aspirations assumed definite form on the occasion of the first stage coach which, drawn by four horses, passed through the village of Union Square, in 1826, on its way from Syracuse to Watertown. This produced the first real sensation of his early life, and he was then and there fired with an ambition to become a stage driver. To hold the reins over four fleet coursers, and feel them respond to the music of his whip, was the goal to which he allowed his thoughts to drift, on wings of imagination. He at once commenced a course of training under an adept in the science of stage driving, and in a short time graduated with honors,

not only to himself, but to his teacher, a Mr. Vallentine. His parents offered some objections, and endeavored to show him that his ambitious propensities would not meet with that friendly recognition by the world which he imagined would attend his efforts, but their arguments were of no avail, and early in the year 1827 he left home to give scope to the talents he had cultivated, his objective point being Auburn, N. Y., the then great stage centre.

#### THE BOHEMIAN STAGE DRIVER.

On his arrival at Auburn he made himself known to the proprietor and manager of the stage route from Syracuse to Geneva, a Mr. J. M. Sherwood, who, being favorably impressed with the young man from Union Square, elevated him to the top of a stage coach. His early aspirations were thus realized at the age of nineteen; and in the year 1827 he started out on his first trip, it being from Auburn to Geneva, *via* Seneca Falls. He

remained in the employ of Mr. Sherwood for one year; and during the succeeding two years, in the employ of other stage proprietors, he drove over every stage route between Albany and Geneva, N. Y.

Among Mr. Sherwood's rules and regulations was one requiring the frequent change of drivers from one route to another; and the reason assigned for this rotation was that the employes in this manner were prevented from forming too many acquaintances, especially at the lay-over places. Mr. Virgil does not say whether it became necessary to adopt this rule previous or subsequent to his employment by Mr. Sherwood.

FROM COACH TO OFFICE.

He temporarily relinquished stage driving in 1830, and assumed the duties of clerk in the office of Thorpe & Sprague, stage proprietors at Albany, N. Y. He remained in that position until the partial completion of the Mohawk and Hudson

Railroad in 1832, when he sought and obtained employment on the railroad at that time running between Albany and Schenectady. In 1833 he resumed his old business, this time with Rice & Baker, afterwards Baker & Walker, in whose employ he remained as stage driver about two years, his last experience as a driver being between New York city and Yonkers, during the close of navigation in 1834 and 1835. He then became their clerk in Albany, where he remained until June, 1842

THE "NEW IDEA."

In the month of August, 1841, Mr. Wm. F. Harnden established an express line between Boston and Albany, the first trip as messenger being made by Mr. John A. Pullen, who traveled from Boston to Chatham by rail, and thence by stage to Albany. The all rail route between Boston and Albany was completed through a short time subsequent during the same year.

It was on the occasion of Mr. Pullen's debut in Albany, that Mr. Virgil first became imbued with the idea of becoming an expressman. Mr. Harnden's ideas and methods were carefully inquired into, and, after some deliberation, the establishment of a route for the transaction of express business between Albany and Montreal was determined upon by Mr. Virgil. His time with the stage company had been secured by them until June, 1842. After an ineffectual endeavor to get released, he succeeded in interesting Mr. Samuel Jacobs, of Albany, in the matter, who, in the month of December, 1841, made the initial trip from Albany to Montreal. The trip was made all the way by stage, the route being *via* Troy, Salem, Castleton, Sudbury, Burlington, St. Albans and St. Johns, to Montreal. The firm of J. C. Pierce & Sons, of St. Johns, P. Q., had an extended reputation as general forwarders, and on his arrival there Mr. Jacobs sought their advice, and obtained



from them letters of introduction to a number of the business men in Montreal, but the latter did not give him any encouragement. The scheme was considered Quixotic, and Mr. Jacobs returned to Albany thoroughly discouraged, the loss on the trip being about forty dollars, notwithstanding the fact that only one-half fare was paid to the stage companies. During his absence, Mr. Virgil, through Mr. Pullen, had obtained a lot of Harnden advertising cards, soliciting business and setting forth what was being done by Mr. Harnden between New York, Boston and Albany.

#### THE BENEFITS OF ADVERTISING.

Mr. Jacobs started on another trip in January, 1842, taking those cards with him, which he posted at all points between Albany and Montreal. He returned from this trip considerably encouraged, and wished Mr. Virgil also to go on the road, urging that the more frequent communi-

cation would render the project popular and be likely to make it successful.

Previous to Mr. Virgil's start, Mr. Jacobs made a third trip to Montreal. On this occasion he carried with him a small trunk in addition to the carpet-bag, which he had taken with him on the former trips. The total effects on the trip south consisted of four small money packages destined to Troy, N. Y., which place at that time monopolized the northern business.

THE FIRST AGENCY ESTABLISHED.

Mr. Virgil, on his first trip, left Albany on the 30th day of June, 1842. The first regular agency was established in the fall of 1842, at Castleton, Vermont, with Geo. D. Spencer as agent.

Messrs. Virgil and Jacobs continued together until February, 1843, when the latter becoming discouraged, withdrew, his place being taken by a Mr. Howard, who also withdrew after eight months' service. Mr. Howard's interest was purchased by

Mr. H. F. Rice, at that time a clerk in the office of Azariah C. Flagg, Secretary of State. Shortly after Messrs. Virgil and Rice extended their routes to New York city, but did not do any local business between Troy, Albany and New York.

#### GROWTH OF THE BUSINESS.

In the winter of 1846 they secured the services of Mr. John O. Grady and Mr. Charles P. Geer, the latter now the agent of the American and the United States and Canada Express Companies, at Ogdensburgh, N. Y. With this addition to the force they were able to make weekly trips between Montreal and New York, covering all points on both sides of Lake Champlain.

In the year 1847, the business had grown so large that a superintendent was required. Mr. Virgil, therefore, retired from the road and assumed the duties of that position. Previous to this time the headquarters had been at Albany, N. Y.,

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but the better facilities existing at Troy for the transshipment of freight induced a change, and the headquarters were removed to the latter point, where they have since remained.

HOW MONTREAL WAS REACHED.

Previous to 1847, the messenger traveled north from Troy on the famous Red Bird line of stages owned by Peter Comstock, who was assisted in the management of the line by Mr. I. V. Baker, now the honored president of the New York and Canada Railroad. Mr. Comstock also owned all the packet boats and stage lines running from Troy to Montreal *via* the west side of Lake Champlain. At that time the steamboats on Lake Champlain were commanded by Captains Richard W. Sherman, Daniel Lyon and Gideon Lathrop, names familiar to the northern traveling public of "ye olden time." During the season of navigation the mode of transportation between New York and

Montreal was from New York to Troy, by steamboat, 150 miles; Troy to Whitehall, by packet-boat, seventy miles; from Whitehall through Lake Champlain and St. Johns river to St. Johns, by steamboat, 155 miles; from St. Johns to La Prairie, by railroad, sixteen miles, and from La Prairie to Montreal, by steamboat, nine miles. The journey occupied three days. The railroad between St. Johns and La Prairie was built in primitive style, with "strap" rails, and the cars were similar to those used between Albany and Schenectady in 1834 and 1835.

#### THEN AND NOW.

Now that it is all long since past, it is a pleasure to the old traveler and expressman to recall the time when journeys of any length were only undertaken upon occasions of the greatest importance, especially during the winter months, when the whole distance had to be traveled by stage. In those days, a winter trip from

New York to Montreal occupied six days, to say nothing of the fatigue and sufferings from the cold. The same trip is now done in fourteen hours, in almost as much comfort as one would find at home.

CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS.

From 1847 to 1850 there was no change in the affairs of the company, the firm being Virgil & Rice. In 1850, they consolidated with Mr. Pullen, who, as has been mentioned, was the first to suggest the express business to Mr. Virgil.

Mr. Pullen left the employ of Mr. Harn- den, for whom he was acting as messenger on the Boston and Albany Railroad, and in 1842, in connection with a Mr. Copp, started in the business between Troy and New York. They also acted as messengers for Messrs. Pomeroy & Wells, who had established an express between New York, Albany and the West. After the consolidation with Mr. Pullen, in 1850, the firm was known as Pullen, Virgil &

Co. There was no further change of general interest until 1853, except that the railroad was completed through from New York to the St. Lawrence River, and staging was abandoned.

In 1853, one-half of Messrs. Pullen, Virgil & Co.'s interest was purchased by Johnston Livingston, D. N. Barney and Col. McKay, at which time they organized under the name of the National Express Co., with Mr. Barney as President, and Mr. Virgil as General Superintendent. The Board of Directors, at present, consists of Alexander Holland, President; E. H. Virgil, Secretary; L. W. Winchester, Treasurer; Johnston Livingston and James C. Fargo.

#### THE GIANT OF THE ROAD.

Those who are favored with a personal acquaintance with Mr. Virgil, or at all interested, one way or another, in the history of the express business, or who like accounts of the adventures and hard-

ships of pioneer travelers, will read with interest a few reminiscences here given in this connection. It is not an easy matter to give an adequate and accurate description of Mr. Virgil's appearance when dressed for his winter travels. He is possessed of a massive frame, which, in the years of his earlier manhood, was perfectly straight and well rounded. Wrapped in a huge fur coat, topped with a fur cap of similar proportions, he was a formidable object on the road. Notwithstanding the fact being generally known that the effects he carried with him were of the most valuable description, he was never interfered with in any manner. His vivid imagination, however, was on one occasion extended to its utmost tension, probably with a fear of being kidnapped, as the following can be accounted for in no other way. It seems that two little French Canadians were plodding along through the snow, between St. Albans and Burlington, when they were overtaken by the



stage sleigh. Thinking they might get a little rest, they got into the "boot" in the rear of the sleigh, and no sooner had they comfortably arranged themselves than they were astonished beyond measure by the sudden appearance of a stern and threatening face encased in fur, from over the top of the stage above them, two horse pistols pointing at their heads and a perfect storm of Anglo-Saxon expletives, which, though not understood, were sufficient to cause them to beat a quick retreat, and they soon disappeared. It is evident that Mr. Virgil somewhat regretted that this story escaped him, as he endeavored to explain by saying that he felt justified in his severe treatment of the poor Frenchmen, as he had a valuable load of express matter. He further says that some time after, at Burlington, one of them being introduced to him, in referring to his exit from the sleigh, said, "Mr. Virgile, I thought you was the devile."

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES.

An unfortunate trip, with a fortunate ending, was one that terminated on the 19th day of November, 1845. After passing through Lake Champlain on the last trip for the season of the steamer Burlington, Capt. Sherman, bound north, Mr. Virgil, at La Prairie, boarded the steamer Prince Albert for Montreal, which after going about one-half mile struck a rock. The river was full of floating ice, which crashed against the boat, not however doing any material damage. She remained there all night, and the next morning she was frozen in the ice, which reached to the La Prairie shore. The principal express matter on the trip consisted of \$20,000 in silver, in four kegs, each weighing 320 pounds. Four hand-sleds were procured and with one keg on each of them, La Prairie was again safely reached twenty-four hours after leaving. The silver was then loaded on

a lumber wagon and taken to St. Lambert and put on board the steamer Fire Fly, which shortly afterwards started for Montreal. When off St. Helen's Island, about a mile from St. Lambert, she struck bottom, but got off and proceeded on towards Montreal. The river had frozen out to the distance of about one-quarter of a mile from the dock at Montreal, and it became necessary to force a passage by breaking through the ice, which was done, and the dock safely reached. The last keg of silver had just been removed when the steamer suddenly sunk.

#### VALUABLE EXPRESS PARCELS.


Not a small amount of the receipts during the staging period may be attributed to Mr. Virgil's well-known gallantry and partiality for the gentler sex. His reputation in this respect became proverbial, and resulted in increasing the receipts materially, besides surrounding the business with attractions not contemplated at

the outset. It became the custom for gentlemen in Montreal or New York, when it was necessary for their wives or daughters to travel without their protection, to give them over to Mr. Virgil's charge, who made it his business to see that they were bountifully provided for at the hotels and made as comfortable as possible on the route, and promptly delivered on arrival at their destination. An illustration of his gallantry may be learned from an incident that took place near St. Albans, Vermont. A stage-sleigh contained three persons inside, one occupying each seat in the following order: On the rear seat a lady; on the centre seat Mr. Virgil, and on the front seat an unknown male. The latter individual concluded to smoke, and drawing forth an aged and dark complexioned clay pipe, filled and lit it. Some conversation took place between the lady and Mr. Virgil, the result of which was the latter requested the smoker to desist

as the fumes were not agreeable to the lady. The only response was a persistent and increased puffing. There was a quick movement and the smoker felt himself grasped by the collar of his coat and the rear portion of his unmentionables, and the next moment all that could be seen of him was his feet, which protruded from a snow-bank at the roadside. The driver was urged to make all possible haste. He did so, and no more was seen of the smoker.

#### LUXURIES FOR THE CANADIANS.


The first shipment of live lobsters that ever went into Montreal, was taken there by Mr. Virgil, who, after boarding the steamer at La Prairie, improvised an entertainment by removing the cover of the box and dumping them on the deck. The fifty lobsters thus liberated after a long journey seemed pleased and were glad of the opportunity of taking a little exercise. The passengers were as lively as the



lobsters. The ladies threw themselves into the arms of their male protectors, and those unprovided with such conveniences mounted the chairs and tables; the crew became demoralized and quiet was not restored until the lobsters were secured and returned to their quarters.

THE SINEWS OF WAR.

During the years 1844, '45 and '46, the "sinews of war" were obtained in a large degree by purchasing Canadian bank bills in New York city at a discount of five to fifteen per cent, for which par was received at Montreal, also by the purchase in New York of English shillings at twenty cents each, four of which in Montreal brought ninety-eight and one-quarter cents in Mexican dollars or old French crowns, which in turn were worth in New York from two to three per cent premium. With the profits of these exchanges regular trips were made and in this way the confidence of the public was gained.



So implicit was this confidence that often two four-horse teams were required to transport the coin. In such cases Mr. Virgil always seated himself with the driver of the rear team, and with relays of horses, traversed the whole distance between Montreal and New York.

The cause of the accumulation of silver in such large quantities in Canada, was the payment of it to the troops by the British government which, at this time, had a large army stationed there.

#### TRAVEL IN SUMMER.

In the summer, relays of fast horses were hired for the trip between Whitehall and Troy, thus shortening the time usually taken between those points, besides making close connection with the boats for New York, and invariably arriving there 24 hours ahead of the mails. The present cheap rate of postage, adopted by Congress in 1851, is in a measure due to the enterprise of expressmen who, when

the postage was 10 cents, carried letters to all points reached by them for 5 cents, thus demonstrating the practicability of lower rates being remunerative, besides giving quicker service.

Some further interesting accounts of Mr. Virgil's early adventures will perhaps have an added interest if given in his own language. Being possessed of a remarkably good memory, he relates them as readily and graphically as if they were occurrences of but yesterday. The following verbatim accounts are therefore given :

MR. VIRGIL'S NARRATIVE.

"We often met with great difficulty in getting across the St. Lawrence river. The usual way of crossing was by steamboat from La Prairie, nine miles above Montreal. The current there runs about nine miles an hour, as is also the case at St. Lambert, which point lies directly opposite Montreal, and was the regular crossing place after the steamboats were



laid up. The river was usually full of moving ice by the twentieth of November, and the steamboats then went into winter quarters. The swiftness of the current prevents the river from freezing over until about the first of January. During this interval the crossing was made with canoes, and was extremely hazardous. The large floes that came down over the Lachine rapids, nine miles above St. Lambert, would strike the canoes with great force. Our only safety in such cases was to jump from the canoes to the floating cakes of ice; then, with a rope, usually about 100 feet long, which was always attached to the bow of the canoe, we would pull it on the ice, and float along until we struck open water, then resume our places and paddle on. It sometimes took from two to four hours to make the passage. I crossed in this way regularly for five winters, and after this occasionally, up to 1860. The mercury usually stood from

twenty to thirty, and sometimes forty degrees below zero. The first ice usually makes about Christmas time, at Long Point, four miles below Montreal. There the river widens to nearly two and one-half miles. The current is very slow, running about two miles an hour. This causes the formation of a dam; the water sets back up the river, and if the mercury stays as low as twenty-five to thirty degrees below zero, an ice bridge forms between Montreal and St. Lambert, which, when the water finally subsides, leaves the ice in all sorts of shapes, and in every conceivable position. A roadway is made by cutting and scaling the ice, and indicated by spruce limbs. Then all went well until about the fifteenth of April, when the batteaux and canoes were again brought into requisition, and were the only means of crossing until the river was clear of ice.

## MODERN IMPROVEMENTS.

"The completion of Victoria bridge, in 1860, from St. Lambert to Montreal, has done away with all this trouble in getting across the St. Lawrence. The bridge is of tubular iron, twenty-two feet high and sixteen feet wide, and is considered one of the wonders of the world. It is 9,194 feet long, and rests upon twenty-four stone abutments. The central tube is 330 feet in length. The cost was \$6,300,000.

"When the river was impassable at Long Point and St. Lambert, we went to Caughnawaga, an Indian village nine miles west of St. Lambert, and directly opposite Lachine, the latter lying at the head of the rapids of that name and at the foot of Lake St. Louis, a widening of the St. Lawrence river about twenty-five miles in length.

## A HAIRBREADTH ESCAPE.

"After the ice forms in Lake St. Louis it comes down in large sheets and is

separated by the swift currents, leaving open places between Caughnawaga and Lachine, where at times it was possible to cross with canoes when all other avenues were closed. I arrived at Caughnawaga one evening in the winter of 1845, and retired, expecting to cross to Lachine in the morning. Upon rising in the morning I found that the mercury stood twenty degrees below zero, that a fog enveloped all objects, and nothing could be discerned 100 feet distant. In consequence of this I did not attempt to cross until mid-day. I then made the attempt and succeeded, not, however, without supreme difficulties, and an escape, the memory of which still causes my pulse to beat recklessly. I secured the services of two Indians and seating myself in a canoe shoved out into the river, which was frozen some fifty feet from the shore. They remained on the ice and retained the rope, one end of which was fastened to the bow of the

canoe. With this rope they towed me up the river about half a mile for the purpose of avoiding the swift currents near the rapids. They then got into the canoe and we started with the bow headed diagonally up stream. The fog still shrouded all objects, and it was with the utmost difficulty that, with our ice hooks, we prevented the cakes of ice from striking us with a force that would have sent us to the bottom. We finally struck a large floe and were obliged to alight upon it. We then made for the other side, dragging the canoe with us, which we again launched. The fog occasionally lifted and enabled us to get our bearings, which were not satisfactory in all particulars, as the sounds which reached our ears warned us of the unpleasant proximity of the rapids, a foe into whose icy embrace we were swiftly drifting. We had about concluded that our efforts had been in vain, and that in a few moments we would be dashed to pieces on the rocks,

when suddenly the fog lifted and disclosed a small bay on the Lachine side of the river into which the ice had drifted. We paddled for this point with an 'energy born of desperation' and succeeded in reaching the outer cakes, when one of the Indians, with the end of the rope in one hand, and an ice hook in the other, leaped to one of the blocks of ice and succeeded in reaching the shore. We landed near the old wind-mill, about 100 feet above the rapids.

NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE OF YE OLDEN TYME.

"Another experience of crossing the St. Lawrence river under adverse circumstances took place on Christmas eve, in the year 1842. Perhaps it would be well to give the reason for making such extraordinary efforts, when it was dangerous to do so. I arrived at Burlington, Vermont, at 8 P. M. on the 23d of December, 1842, and shortly after retiring was aroused by the stage agent, who

informed me that a package addressed to Mr. Rams y, editor of the Montreal Gazette, and a letter addressed to me had just arrived by special messenger from Mr. Lacy, of Albany, N. Y. At this time the Cunard line of steamers ran between Liverpool and Boston, and the last steamer had brought news of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and China, effected September 11th, 1842. Mr. Lacy had received this news at Albany from Boston, *via* the Boston and Albany railroad, and by special messenger, with relays of horses furnished by the stage companies, had overtaken me at Burlington, Vermont. His letter to me contained instructions to reach Montreal under any circumstances, and at all hazards, ahead of the mails and passengers from Liverpool and Boston, traveling *via* the regular route between Boston and Montreal. This route was by rail from Boston to Concord, then by stage to Burlington, *via* Montpelier. From Burlington to

Montreal, the same route was traveled by both Boston and New York passengers. The package for Mr. Ramsey contained the news referred to, and as despatch is one of the main timbers in the construction of our business, I determined to follow Mr. Lacy's instructions to the letter. The passengers from Boston arrived at Burlington the same night. We all left Burlington together the next morning at 4 A. M. Many of the passengers were Montreal merchants, on their return from Liverpool.

"The incidents of the trip from Liverpool, and the news of peace furnished a fund of highly entertaining conversation, rendering the stage journey between Burlington and St. Johns especially enjoyable. We arrived at St. Johns at 6.30 P. M., and were told that the river was impassable at all points. All hope of reaching Montreal that night was therefore abandoned except by me. My intentions, however, were not expressed.



After supper my absence was noticed and the landlord questioned, but as I had told him that I intended spending the evening with my agent, Mr. Charles S. Pierce, no clue to my movements was discovered. My experience in crossing the river had been such, I made up my mind that perhaps it was possible to get across at Long Point, and as the thermometer stood at twenty degrees below zero, I did not doubt but that a dam had formed at that place. Mr. Pierce, of course, knew that I intended to cross the river that night; he therefore secured a horse and cutter with a driver that knew the way to Longueuil, a small village about three miles from Long Point, and at 8.30 P. M. we started. The distance from St. Johns to Longueuil is twenty-six miles. The country is perfectly level, and the farmers take down the fences in the winter to prevent the snow from drifting in the roads. We lost our way and got a long distance from the road,

but finally regained it and reached Longueuil at 1.30 Christmas morning. My first move at Longueuil was to get a pilot. On inquiring of the landlord at the hotel, he informed me that the ice had just "taken" that afternoon, that a man who was attending a ball, then in progress at the hotel, had come from the other side, arriving "just at dusk," and that he was the only person who had crossed the river on the ice. The man was summoned and at first refused to pilot me; he said that it was unsafe to cross in daylight and he would not risk himself at night. After considerable urging, supplemented by an offer of ten Yankee dollars, he yielded; but would not accept pay in advance. He said that if he never reached Long Point he would not need the money, and if he did reach there he was satisfied that I would pay him according to agreement. We started, first going down the river two miles to a point directly opposite Long Point

Church. Christmas festivities were in progress at the church, which was illuminated for the occasion. We started on the ice at 2.45 A. M., each provided with lanterns and long poles, in addition to which I carried my carpet-bag. As will be surmised, our object in starting at a point directly opposite the church was, that it might serve as a beacon. The ice had formed as smooth as a mirror, but was liable to break up at any moment. The incessant reverberations filled us with fear. We were constantly falling, an experience calculated to increase our sense of insecurity. Perhaps the best explanation of my feelings on this occasion would be similar to that of the old soldier, noted for his bravery in action, who, when the lines were advancing to meet the enemy, perceiving a rabbit spring from a bush and make for the rear, said: "Run while you have a chance. If I had no greater reputation at stake than you, I would be with you." After two and one-half hours of

peril, we reached the shore, where the pilot's first move was to fall on his knees and thank the Virgin Mary for bringing him safely over; the next, to place one-half of what I paid him in the poor-box of the church.

"At fifteen minutes before six I awoke Mr. Ramsey, at his residence, in Montreal. His first salutation was, "Hallo! Virgil! Is this you, or your ghost?" I was liberally remunerated for the delivery of the package, and at 9 A. M. Montreal was flooded with extras containing the news of peace. Some time subsequently the hotel-keeper at St. Johns informed me that in the morning inquiries were made by the passengers, and that when he told them that he had not seen me since the night previous, they all declared that I had served them a regular Yankee trick; that I knew all the time of some point where it was possible to get across the river. They arrived at Montreal at 5.30 P. M. Christmas day."

## THE RESULT OF A LIFE WORK.

This, in brief, is the history of the National Express Company, a few of the difficulties experienced in establishing it upon a paying basis, and the important part taken in it by the originator. Its growth has been steady, and the volume of business transacted by it to-day is very large. It has proved a public benefactor in many ways, and is not by any means among the least of the great conveniences of this modern age of improvements. From one office at each end of the line, and trips made semi-monthly under the difficulties narrated, and many others, it has grown in 38 years to require, for the transaction of its local and general business, about 500 men, who run as messengers on boats and trains, act as agents and clerks in the 250 offices, drive the 200 horses which draw the delivery wagons in cities and villages; and daily and hourly trips are made between important points,

delivering consignments representing vast wealth, and taking especial care of all kinds of merchandise and valuables. It stands pre-eminent as one of the greatest monuments a man can rear to himself to perpetuate the results of indomitable courage and perseverance and business ability. Such a business monument to such a man is the National Express Company to Mr. E. H. Virgil; and to him and Mr. Jacobs belongs the credit of being the first to enter Canada in express interests, and especially to the former, who enlisted himself heartily into the work, and, in spite of obstacles which to other men would have seemed insurmountable, he succeeded; and the magnitude of his success needs no words of praise, and no greater compliment than is shown in the existence of the National Express Company.







